

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCENE AT BEGINNING OF SUMMER

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. AS THE BEGINNING OF THE SIX-MONTH
"WHITE PERIOD" PRIOR TO THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT
APPROACHES ON JUNE 24, THE POLITICAL SCENE APPEARS RELA-
TIVELY STABLE AND CALM. IN RESPONSE TO THE
UNSETTLING EVENTS OF THE MORO ASSASSINATION AND
MAY ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS, THE PARTIES HAVE WARNED
AGAINST ANY WEAKENING OF THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT THAT
SUPPORTS THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. THEY SHARE A CONSENSUS
THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD LAST AT LEAST THROUGH THE
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DECEMBER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AN EVENT WHICH INVOLVES
NOT ONLY THE SELECTION OF A REPLACEMENT FOR LEONE BUT AN
OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE
IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THE SURFACE CALM IS MORE APPARENT THAN
REAL, HOWEVER. THE MAY EVENTS HAVE REOPENED BASIC
POLITICAL QUESTIONS. BEHIND THE SCENES, THE CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO WRESTLE WITH THE DIFFICULT

PROBLEM OF DEVISING A NEW PATTERN OF PARTY LEADERSHIP FOR THE POST-MORO PERIOD. AS IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT A DC CANDIDATE WILL BE SELECTED, THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL REPRESENT THE FIRST STAGE IN THIS ACTIVITY. IN ADDITION TO THE DC'S MANEUVERING, THE PCI'S NEED TO ADOPT A MORE RIGID AND AGGRESSIVE POSTURE FOLLOWING ITS ELECTION SETBACK AND THE PSI'S EMBARKMENT ON A CLEARLY AUTONOMOUS COURSE WILL BE UNSETTLING ELEMENTS OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. ALTHOUGH THE CHANCE OF A CRISIS DURING THE "WHITE PERIOD" CANNOT BE RULED OUT, WE BELIEVE THE POLITICAL PARTIES WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP THE LID ON THE POT AT LEAST THROUGH THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

1. EFFECT OF THE MAY ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS.

ALTHOUGH ITS FULL IMPACT IS STILL FAR FROM CLEAR, THE PCI'S UNEXPECTED THUMPING IN THE MAY ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS HAS ALREADY CHANGED MANY OF THE QUADRANTS AND GIVEN IN THE RECENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. TO BE SURE, THE ELECTIONS INVOLVED ONLY A TENTH OF THE ELECTORATE, AND LOCAL FACTORS AND THE TRAGIC MORO ASSASSINATION PLAYED SOME ROLE. NONE OF THE PARTIES, HOWEVER, DISCOUNT THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE ELECTIONS AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TESTING OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL MOOD SINCE THE 1976 ELECTIONS WHICH USHERED THE PCI ONTO THE NATIONAL STAGE.

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2. THE PCI: A MYTH EXPLODED.

SET BACK A FULL NINE PERCENTAGE POINTS FROM ITS GREAT GAINS IN 1975 AND 1976, THE PCI LEADERSHIP IS NOW ENGAGED IN AN INTENSIVE, SELF-CRITICAL ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE WHY THE PARTY WAS APPARENTLY UNABLE TO RETAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE MODERATE VOTER WHO, ATTRACTED BY "BERLINGUERISM," HAD PROPELLED THE PCI TO THE THRESHOLD OF GOVERNMENT POWER. WHATEVER THE REASONS (AND BERLINGUER HAS SUGGESTED MANY, INCLUDING VOTER PERCEPTION THAT "TERRORISM IS RED"), THE IMPORTANT POLITICAL FACT IS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE MID-FIFTIES, THE PCI'S STEADY ELECTORAL GROWTH HAS BEEN REVERSED AND THE FORMIDABLE MYTH OF PCI INVINCIBILITY AND INEVITABLE SUCCESS EXPLODED.

3. THE PSI: SAVED FOR ANOTHER DAY.

THE EQUALLY GOOD SHOWING OF THE SOCIALISTS AND LAY PARTIES HAD HAD A REINVIGORATING EFFECT ON THESE FORCES. IT SUGGESTS THAT THE TREND TOWARD BIPOLARIZATION MAY HAVE BEEN ATTENUATED IF NOT ARRESTED. THE ELECTIONS APPEARED TO SANCTION PSI LEADER CRAXI'S AUTONOMOUS POLICY LINE AND

CEMENTED HIS LEADERSHIP HOLD OVER A PREVIOUSLY BADLY
DIVIDED PARTY. WITH ITS ELECTORAL GAINS AND NEW-FOUND
UNITY, THE PSI MAY HAVE A GREATER CHANCE TO PLAY AN
EFFECTIVE POLITICAL ROLE.

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4. THE DC: NEW ALTERNATIVES.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT'S ELECTORAL SUCCESS, ALTHOUGH NOT
UNEXPECTED, WAS DRAMATIC WHEN COMPARED TO THE PCI'S LOSSES.
TO A PARTY THAT HAS BEEN DISPIRITED BY STEADY PCI ADVANCES
AND SHAKEN BY THE MORO EXPERIENCE, THE ELECTION RESULTS
PROVIDED A NEW SENSE OF CONFIDENCE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE
NEW SITUATION OPENS POSSIBILITIES FOR NEW POLITICAL ALTER-
NATIVES TO A PARTY WHICH ONLY RECENTLY RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTED
MORO'S INSERTION OF THE PCI IN THE GOVERNING MAJORITY
BECAUSE THERE WERE NO OTHER REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES OR
CHOICES.

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5. PARTIES, HOWEVER, WARN AGAINST CHANGES.

THESE NEW FACTORS HAVE ALREADY PRODUCED AN UNSETTLING REACTION. MOREOVER, TENSIONS AND BEHIND-THE-SCENE MANEUVERING CAN BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE AS THE SIX-MONTH "WHITE PERIOD" BEGINS JUNE 24 LEADING UP TO THE ELECTION OF A SUCCESSOR TO PRESIDENT LEONE. COGNIZANT OF THE HEIGHTENED RISK TO THE STABILITY OF THE EXISTING ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT FORMULA, ALL THE PARTIES HAVE WARNED AGAINST ABRUPT CHANGES. AT LEAST UNTIL THE ELECTON OF A NEW PRESIDENT IN DECEMBER, THE PARTIES APPEAR AGREED ON THE NEED TO PRESERVE THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT. NONE BELIEVE THE MOMENT OPPORTUNE TO PRECIPITATE A CHANGE.

6. THERE ARE Everal REASONS FOR THIS. IN A PERIOD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING NEARLY SIX MONTHS OF GOVERNMENT CRISIS, INERTIA AND TERRORIST TRAUMA, THE NEED FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY IS GREAT. ON THE STRICTLY POLITICAL LEVEL, MOREOVER, MORO'S SUDDEN REMOVAL FROM THE SCENE AND THE MAY ELECTION IMPACT HAVE LEFT THE PARTIES DISORIENTED AND IN NEED OF A PERIOD OF AT LEAST SURFACE CALM. MORO'S ELECTION TO THE PRESIDENCY HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY ASSURED. THE PARTIES NEED TIME TO SORT OUT THE NEW SITUATION. THEY ARE NOT YET READY TO MAKE THE DECISIONS THEY WILL HAVE TO TAKE ON A NEW PRESIDENT. THE PROBLEM IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT WILL PROBABLY SET THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT, INCLUDING THE PATTERN OF DC-PCI BEHAVIOR. IT COULD ALSO SERVE AS A LITMUS TEST FOR A POSSIBLE RENEWAL OF DC-PSI POLITICAL COOPERATION. THE PARTIES WILL NEED TO CONSIDER THE AVAILABLE OPTIONS AND TEST POSSIBLE NEW COMBINATIONS OF FORCES.

7. DC MUST SORT OUT ITS LEADERSHIP PROBLEM.

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FOR THE DC, THE PROBLEM IS EVEN MORE COMPLEX. MORO'S DEATH HAS OPENED UP AN INTERNAL LEADERSHIP PROBLEM AT A HIGHLY FRAGILE POLITICAL MOMENT. UNTIL A NEW LEADERSHIP PATTERN EMERGES, THE DC WILL FACE A ROUGH PERIOD OF INTERNAL MANEUVERING AND SHIFTING ALLIANCES. AS THERE IS NO UNDISPUTED LEADER TO ASSUME MORO'S MANTLE, THE PROSPECTS ARE FOR A RETURN TO THE PATTERN OF COLLEGIAL LEADERSHIP THAT HAS LONG PREVAILED IN THE DC. IN THE PROCESS, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE INFLUENCE OF THE MODERATE WING OF THE

PARTY WILL INCREASE. SINCE THE 1976 ELECTIONS, THIS ELEMENT (WHICH INCLUDES MANY OF THE YOUNG DC REFORMERS) HAS SOUGHT A GREATER VOICE IN PARTY DECISION-MAKING AND OFFICE. MORO'S REMOVAL FROM THE SCENE WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE MINORITY ZACCAGNINI-ANDREOTTI RULING GROUP (AN ALLIANCE OF COMPETITIVE INTERESTS) TO RESIST PRESSURES FROM THE MODERATES.

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8. THE FIRST ACT OF THE DC'S LEADERSHIP TURNOVER WILL BE PLAYED OUT IN THE SELECTION OF A SUCCESSOR TO LEONE. IN THE EVIDENT ABSENCE OF A VIABLE LAY PARTY CANDIDATE, IT APPEARS INCREASINGLY CERTAIN THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WILL RETAIN THE PRESIDENCY. TO BE SUCCESSFUL, HOWEVER, THE WINNING DC CANDIDATE MUST NOT ONLY LINE UP SUFFICIENT ELEMENTS OF SUPPORT FROM HIS OWN PARTY BUT ALSO RECEIVE THE VOTES OF THE PCI (OR, THE PSI). ANDREOTTI, ZACCAGNINI AND FANFANI ARE ALL IN THE RUNNING. THE CONTEST WILL BE HARD FOUGHT, MOSTLY BEHIND THE SCENES, AND THEREFORE OFTEN CONFUSING TO THE OUTSIDE OBSERVER.

9. PCI AND PSI RE-EXAMINE THEIR POSITIONS.

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THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS WILL NOT SIT IDLY BY, HOWEVER, AS DC LEADERS MANEUVER AND SLUG IT OUT. MORO'S DEATH AND THE ELECTIONS HAVE CREATED A NEW SITUATION FOR THEM, TOO. THE PCI HAS ALREADY GIVEN EVIDENCE THAT IT WILL BE MORE RIGID AND AGGRESSIVE IN ASSERTING ITS POLITICAL WILL. WITHOUT ABANDONING ITS BASIC STRATEGY OF COOPERATION WITH THE DC, IT WILL SEEK TO REGAIN THE MOMENTUM BROKEN BY THE ELECTION SETBACK. CAUGHT IN THE DILEMMA OF SUPPORTING AND LEGITIMIZING THE DC, ITS FORMER ENEMY, THE PCI WILL HAVE TO DEMONSTRATE ANEW--AND BEFORE NOT TOO LONG--THAT ITS POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH THE DC IS PAYING OFF IN TERMS OF POLITICAL POWER. AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, PRESSURES WITHIN THE PARTY FOR A MORE DECISIVE VOICE COULD INTENSIFY.

10. BY CONSOLIDATING CRAXI'S POSITION IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY, THE ELCTIONS PLACED THE PSI ON AN AUTONOMOUS ROAD. THE PSI'S POLICY OF THE LEFT ALTERNATIVE (COOPERATION WITH THE PCI) IS ALL BUT DEAD. THE ITALIAN LEFT APPEARS MORE DEEPLY DIVIDED THAN EVER. THE GULF HAS GROWN BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND THE EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY LEFT AND BETWEEN THE PCI AND THE PSI. IN THEORY, THE PSI'S STRONGLY INDEPENDENT COURSE COULD ULTIMATELY IMPROVE THE PROSPECTS OF RENEWED DC-PSI COOPERATION. THIS SEEMS TO BE CRAXI'S INTENTION. THE PSI'S TENDENCY TOWARD ADVENTURISM, THOUGH, INHIBITS CLOSER COOPERATION WITH THE DC. UNPREDICTABLE AND UNTRUSTED, THE SOCIALISTS ARE STILL A WILD CARD IN THE ITALIAN DECK.

11. KEEPING THE LID ON.

IN SUM, THE PROSPECTS ARE FOR THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT TO HOLD TOGETHER AT LEAST THROUGH THE PRESIDENTIAL
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ELECTIONS. THE COUNTRY, AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES THEMSELVES, NEED THIS BREATHING SPACE. THE CALM WILL LIKELY BE MORE APPARENT THAN REAL, HOWEVER, SINCE RECENT EVENTS HAVE THROWN INTO QUESTION THE VERY BASIS FOR LAST MARCH'S POLITICAL AGREEMENT. IN ADDITION TO THE DC'S LEADERSHIP MANEUVERING, GROWING PCI RIGIDITY AND AGGRESSIVENESS AND THE PSI'S AUTONOMOUS POLICY WILL BE DESTABILIZING

ELEMENTS. WHILE THE POSSIBILITY OF A CRISIS DURING THE
"WHITE PERIOD" CANNOT BE RULED OUT, WE BELIEVE THAT THE
CHANCES ARE THAT THE PARTIES WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP THE LID ON THE
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